917.59
Bee/Let
83763

00083763

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

LETTERS

FROM

FLORIDA

W. e. 49

BY

MRS. H. W. BEECHER,

AUTHOR OF

"MOTHERLY TALKS," "ALL AROUND THE HOUSE," ETC.

83763

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
549 AND 551 BROADWAY.
1879.

COPYRIGHT BY
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
1870.

PREFACE.

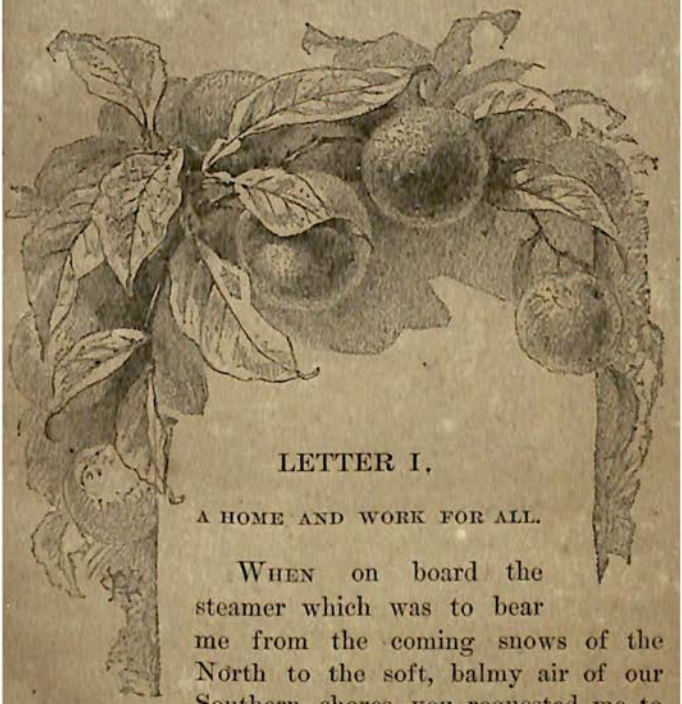
THESE Letters from Florida, by request of many friends, are offered to the public in a simple, convenient form. They do not claim to be a history of Florida, but only the impressions left on a practical mind after several years of close observation, which have been growing stronger each year.

I firmly believe that these letters do not exaggerate the wonderful capabilities of this lovely country. If some of my readers have the privilege of spending a few months there, for two or three years in succession, I am confident that my "impressions" will be so strongly confirmed as to be accepted as trustworthy authority.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
LETTER I.	A HOME AND WORK FOR ALL	7
II.	CASTLES IN SPAIN	21
III.	LIFT UP THE HANDS THAT HANG DOWN AND STRENGTHEN THE FEEBLE KNEES . .	30
IV.	WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, AND CAN BE DONE AGAIN	42
V.	WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY ABOUT MALARIAL FEVER?	54
VI.	SEEK THE TRUTH IN PRIVATE HOMES, NOT IN HOTEL LIFE	67
APPENDIX	. . . . .	79

LETTERS FROM FLORIDA.



LETTER I.

A HOME AND WORK FOR ALL.

When on board the steamer which was to bear me from the coming snows of the North to the soft, balmy air of our Southern shores, you requested me to send you some letters from Florida. The request, on recalling it, strikes me as somewhat indefinite. If you look for something sensational or romantic, you are doomed to a grievous disappointment. That is not my vocation—more's the pity! For never was there a more ample field for the imagination to revel in uncontrolled, or richer opportunities for blending

romance and reality, than this land of flowers offers to the gifted; but, to do it justice, to develop half the wonderful beauties of these bewildering regions calls for a more skillful artist. I can but look with longing on this promised land, this storehouse of poetry and romance; I may not unlock the gates and enter in.

Right here, close by where I now write, from among the beautiful palmettoes, and under the grand old oaks, one still hears the whispers of a wild and terrible tragedy, as full of strange and thrilling incidents from which to weave a story as the most sensational writer can desire—one abundantly able to satisfy those who are only content with graphic or startling narratives, or who most delight to "sup on horrors." We refer to the Mandarin massacre of 1841, which left this lovely village desolate. The Indians destroyed every living soul save some of the inhabitants who were absent on a hunting expedition, and one little boy who escaped their fiendish tortures by hiding in a dense grove of palmettoes. That same boy, now a middle-aged man, still resides here, occupying a house built on the spot where all his friends were murdered.

St. Augustine is one vast reservoir of infinite suggestions and rich material, that have come down from all the prominent nations of the earth as a legacy —a bountiful supply for some future genius of our own land, who, as Walter Scott did for his country, will collect and weave into story or song the many strange, wild scenes, the romantic incidents and thrilling adventures in which this region abounds. Such

a one will win immortal fame by saving the history of this fair land from "sinking into the darkness of oblivion."

Until within a comparatively few years Florida was a bone of contention, or the foot-ball of whichever nation had the skill or craft to gain possession of her and keep her the longest. For a year or two it was in the hands of the French; then wrested from their grasp by the Spaniards, only to be snatched from both by the strong arm of England.

The French coveted this lovely country because they saw in its profusion of fruits and flowers, its brilliant and sweet-singing birds, and soft, balmy air, the promise of a life of ease and perpetual enjoyment, and hoped to find among its wonderful mineral springs the legendary "fountain of life and perpetual youth." The Spaniards reached out after it, hoping, with arrogant and despotic power, to wring from the toil of natives, through merciless taskmasters, fabulous wealth, which they imagined was hid in its bosom. The English, more practical, discovered at once that its great wealth lay in the rich fruits and productions of its soil, which through well-directed labor would give to them a rich possession. They sought to develop the resources of the land by suitable cultivation and organizing manufactories for such work as promised to bring forward the best that Florida could yield in the most remunerative manner.

But neither held this goodly land long enough under their rule to enjoy much of that which each most desired. Yet the very strife and misrule that

prevailed until a recent period have made Florida rich in wild and fanciful lore; and ere long, under wise and more permanent government, this now sparsely settled region will become populous. Then towns and villages lovely as any New England can boast—and where can you find any more lovely?—will look out from these graceful palms and palmettoes, or find grateful shade under the lofty magnolia and gigantic live oak, gray with moss, that stand like giant sentinels all along the shores of the grand and beautiful St. John's.

Amid such surroundings some one will rise up whose fertile imagination can combine and skillfully weave together the many romantic incidents to be found among the curious legends of Florida. But that is a work upon which I may not venture. Truth unvarnished is, however, full of elements possessing more abiding attractions than the most brilliant story; and to that I shall most strictly adhere.

Finding it necessary to spend the spring months of the last few years in Florida, the impressions made by these visits have greatly strengthened and become more of a fixed belief with each year's experience. This seems to me strong evidence that these impressions are worthy of credence, and may have more substantial value than should be conceded to simple novelty or a passing fancy.

There are not many ladies so situated that they are obliged to witness or understand so much of the sufferings and deprivations among the poor as is daily brought to our door; and the utter impossibility of

giving substantial relief to any appreciable extent is a source of acute distress.

Some assistance is needed every morning, and, to be effective, must often be renewed every evening, and for an indefinite period. The sick, the wicked, the unfortunate, and those ready to perish, are "legion." They come from all nations and from every class of people. Who shall feed this great multitude? But who can turn a deaf ear to their complaints, or send them away empty, without a grievous heartache? There is no end to their calls-for help. No permanent relief for those who suffer.

That much of this destitution is the result of improvidence, carelessness, or actual wrong-doing, no one can deny. But when the curse has fallen, and want and suffering take hold of them, it is too late to speak of the sad mistakes. At least, let the past sleep if you can, while looking for present help, and by sympathy and kindness endeavor to build up a better life. How can this be done?

It is a well-established fact that *giving* to the poor and unfortunate is a bad policy, and usually, except in extreme cases, demoralizing to the recipient. It is a perpetual tax on the benevolent, as well as a cruel kindness to the poor, destroying eventually all energy and self-respect.

Give work, not alms. Find something, however trifling, which each applicant for charity *must* do, to earn even the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table.

Ah! yes. This may be wise and most excellent

advice ; but tell me *where* to find employment for the hundreds who besiege our doors day after day. No one individual can do this. Then how is this sage advice to be followed? That is the true question for these times—a question for which hundreds and thousands are anxiously waiting an answer.

The hard times of the last few years have cruelly tried some of our most valued and refined citizens, and now they who were once the foremost in every good word and work are suffering, with their delicately nurtured families, for the common necessaries of life, which the severity of our Northern winters renders truly indispensable. But, unlike those who are always roaming from street to street, noisily proclaiming their wants, these ask no alms, but only "For God's sake *give us work*, that we may save our families from freezing and starvation!"

How often have I been met by such piteous applications from people well known, and most worthy of assistance! But—*work!* It is hard to find—more scarce even than true charity. It is from such appeals that I turn with an aching heart, powerless to comfort, but earnestly coveting the power to transport such applicants to a climate so genial, for a large part of the year, that the most destitute, if willing to make an effort in their own behalf, have a chance for some relief, and often may secure comforts which they can not have in our Northern winters.

How I long to see those who at the North are weary, seeking work and finding none, down here in Florida, where for fifty dollars forty acres of land

can be purchased, around the lovely inland lakes, of ready access by rail; or for fourteen dollars and sixty cents a quarter section of Government land can be "entered," free from taxes for five years, or long enough to bring the land into a state of cultivation that will yield a very comfortable support till an orange grove is well established, and the trees almost old enough to give fair promise of remuneration. When a section is entered, with any just hope of future success, it should be done by those who are prepared to "rough it," who are not afraid of hard work and simple food for a few years.

It is useless for any to attempt to build up an independent home here, or anywhere, if they begin the operation under the impression that, having "entered" the land, they are to live henceforth on a bed of roses. With that class of the poor we have no sympathy; but with those who are not afraid to work, even though subjected to some rough fare before they master the situation, we have unlimited earnest sympathy.

Those who "enter" land, or "take up" a quarter section, may not find steady and profitable employment with others all the time; but they will find abundant need of all their energies in improving their own land, cheered by the thought that every week's work, and all their efforts to economize and save, though at first hard, are but preparing the way for a comfortable home for their later years.

"Well," say you, "this sounds plausible; but—if too poor to provide for their families at the North, how are they to get to Florida, and buy the forty

acres or the quarter section of land? That's an important question; and if you can't point out the way to effect this, the whole idea is simply visionary."

Ah! but I only said I coveted the power to bring the industrious poor out to Florida, and see them well started in this mode of supporting themselves and families. That power unfortunately I do not possess, and am not so foolish as to imagine destitute people can come unaided. But, stop a moment, and honestly make a business-like calculation, and then tell me if you think my idea so wild or visionary afterward. On the contrary, do you not see, after a few moments' reflection, that such a plan might be a good and economical investment for the benevolent, as well as for the suffering and unfortunate?

Fairly estimated, how much do you imagine the reasonably kind-hearted and benevolent people at the North, in comfortably prosperous circumstances, usually give every winter in charity? In this estimate, bear in mind also how much is as good as thrown away, because often given thoughtlessly—not so much to help the poor, or honor God, as "lest by their continual coming they weary me."

Alms recklessly or inconsiderately given are often worse than wasted. Now, would not a large proportion of the truly charitably disposed feel that one hundred dollars a year was a cheap release from perpetual solicitation? Judging from experience, it seems a low estimate—and many better able would, I doubt not, gladly purchase this freedom by five times that sum. And reflect, when one is thus beset,

how very small the sum must be which is given to any one at our doors. Even if only divided among a few of these claimants it will be hardly sufficient to have an appreciable value, distributed as it must be in homœopathic quantities; and by to-morrow each will be as much in need of assistance as before.

Besides greatly diminishing one's own trouble, would not the amount of actual good accomplished be vastly increased, if there were some hopes of lasting, substantial benefit? Would it not be a truer, nobler charity, first to understand the character and actual wants of those most needing assistance, and then carefully to estimate how much one may feel justified in giving toward supplying one person or one family with immediate food and daily work, until you can make suitable arrangements for their independent support?

Select those you are confident are the most deserving and most anxious to work. With part of the money buy a "land warrant," or a "*homestead*," in Florida, giving the recipient choice of location. With the remainder of the money supply as far as possible a common outfit. Try your own talent for *begging* for once, at least, so far as to secure a passage on some of the Southern steamers, and a little money for farming implements, to start at least one family a year in a new home in Florida.

If these beneficiaries are wisely selected, and have that natural energy and love of independence that will make them accept such hardships and sacrifices as must of necessity mark the first steps of any new occupation, one may rest satisfied that, by thus con-

centrating their charities, one family at least a year may be placed in a fair way for independent support. This can never be done for those who go begging from door to door, losing each day more and more of their self-respect. But if a family thus placed have courage to accept with cheerfulness the early hardships for the joy that is set before them, they have a prospect of building up, slowly but surely, a respectable and independent home.

"You are talking wildly! Suppose the land warrant, or *homestead*, secured—the log-house erected; how is it to be furnished? How provide their daily food while clearing off the woods, preparing their land, and waiting for their crops to grow, even with the hundred dollars you speak of? You acknowledge they may not always be able to find sufficient employment to help them to a trifle, weekly. How will you answer this?"

Well, a homestead of one hundred and fifty acres will cost fourteen dollars and sixty cents. With the sum named they will have eighty-six dollars left for indispensable articles, even if many cast-off articles of household stuff should not be given them when starting. Then, if some neighbors would club together and send several families of the worthy poor at the same time—a kind of colony, but not on the community plan—their money united would, by purchasing articles at wholesale, provide better for the *whole* than could be done for one family alone. If each of these charitably disposed persons should, about the time this colony is starting, have "a clearing-up day," and empty

their attics of clothes and furniture that do no good, but are always in the way, they would be surprised to learn how useful "such rubbish" can be made, and how thankfully it would be received.

But as to the furnishing of that log-house, you have no conception of the very little furniture that is really absolutely necessary here—or indeed anywhere—to make a family reasonably comfortable. Prosperity and wealth multiply the things we *must have* in a marvelous manner, and increase the work that must be done in the same proportion. In some leisure hour take paper and pencil, and, beginning with your own room, put down the articles in that one spot that you *could* do without, and be none the less happy or comfortable.

When people go into the wilderness, and are independent of any "hired help," their wants and *absolutely necessary* equipments diminish with surprising rapidity. I, for one, would like no better amusement than to come here with some few who, like yourself, will think I am talking wildly, and show you how all I have planned can be done. With a good stock of patience, fortitude, and good nature—without which no one is of much value—I should not fear the experiment. A healthful amount of hard work and self-denial may be expected for a few years; but that, in itself, brings genuine enjoyment to an independent spirit, especially when a *home* lies just beyond. And with all this I could promise, as the children say, "lots of fun" besides.

If, in some of those emergencies which will often

occur in the early days of any new work, it should now and then be found necessary to live for a few days on good "*bread and water*," what then? We have tried it quite close enough to understand just what that means; and we also know how a brave and cheerful spirit can bring light into the darkest hour, and a good hearty laugh can give even to such monastic fare a piquancy and relish not always found at tables loaded with the choicest viands. But in this new life to which we long to bring those at the North who are destitute and suffering, there is little fear of any "bread and water" diet, while the rivers and forests abound with food, to be had without money and without price.

The number of dishes required by those who demanded three or four courses or more for their daily dinner will not be needed here; and the cooking utensils and furniture which we think so important in our Northern homes can be easily dispensed with in a pioneer's first efforts. Many things can be manufactured by one's own self or by some of the family without going to the very extreme of retrenchment, or losing sight of neatness and respectability. And thus in every department one soon learns how very little is actually required to insure a good share of comfort and enjoyment.

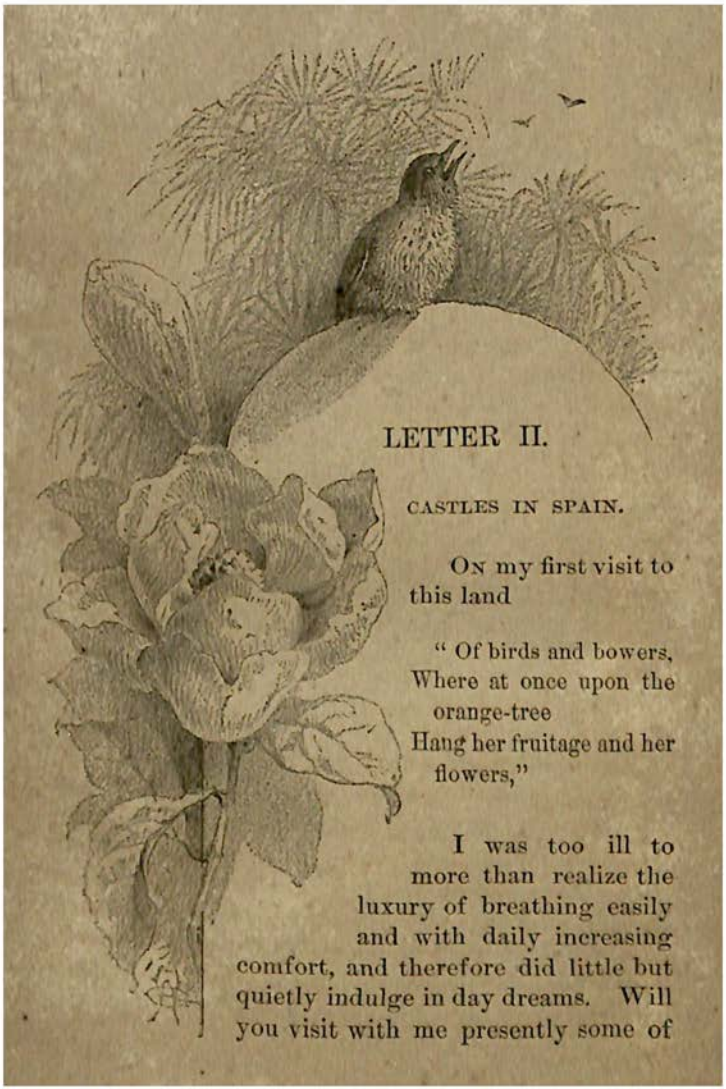
I know of those who, losing all at the North but their patience, energy, and industry, have managed to get down to Florida and enter a "homestead." Erecting a rough but comfortable shelter, and furnishing it with what they would once have thought were worth-

less scraps that remained out of former abundance, and such articles as their skill or ingenuity could manufacture, they prepared a neat and pleasant abode. In this work the women of the family employed every leisure moment to increase their comforts, or make the place attractive, while they were ever ready to help their husbands and sons in putting in the needed crops as fast as the land was cleared. While waiting for these crops to ripen, the men take an hour when needed to keep a plentiful supply of food by hunting and fishing. Whenever opportunity offered, a few days' work for neighbors now and then supplied comforts which they could not raise from their land, or which were desirable. And in this primitive, impromptu home, they already see promise of a bright and peaceful future. A little self-denial for a few years, and these new settlers may look with confidence to the time when they will have every comfort that a healthy, independent life requires, and may safely look forward to a not distant future when they will be the owners of valuable property, with all the luxuries that may be thought desirable.

I am only speaking of what I have seen. That there are difficulties and discouragements between the first steps of such an undertaking and the day which will put the feet on firm foundations, I do not deny. But tell me of any important enterprise which ever begins smoothly, and marches on to full consummation without a ripple of trouble or anxiety—without many mistakes, and perhaps some serious disasters! I think there is less to fear in seeking to build up a

home in Florida—bearing in mind to the fullest extent all the difficulties one is liable to encounter—than when entering a new and untried field elsewhere. This delightful climate, the rapid growth of vegetation, the comparatively short time that must intervene before one begins to reap the fruit of well-directed industry, all conspire to cheer the spirits, to keep the courage alive, and to lighten burdens which but for such encouragement might become oppressive.

I have many "Castles in Spain," built when, miserably sick and feeble, we first came to Florida, and which ever since, as we see more of this charming country, have been rising on firmer foundations than such castles can usually boast. Some of these I will show you; but, having already lingered too long, I will close now, reserving them for the next letter. My "Castles" are sufficiently stable to keep another week.



LETTER II.

CASTLES IN SPAIN.

On my first visit to this land

"Of birds and bowers,
Where at once upon the orange-tree
Hang her fruitage and her flowers,"

I was too ill to more than realize the luxury of breathing easily and with daily increasing comfort, and therefore did little but quietly indulge in day dreams. Will you visit with me presently some of

the "castles" so often built and filled with happy tenants?

The first visit to Florida seldom awakens much enthusiasm. It requires time to become accustomed to the great dissimilarity between this section of our country and the colder regions. One pines for the green fields, the ripening grass, the merry haymaking and harvests, the marks of more rapid progress and broader civilization, which form a prominent feature at the North. We forget the olden times, when, in its primitive, uncultured state, it was as a country far more wild and dreary than anything seen in Florida. But now it shows what labor and skill, united, can do. It has made our cold and rocky North bud and blossom like the rose. Spread over Florida the same skill and energetic labor that for the last century has gradually clothed and beautified the North, and in less than one third of that time this State will be like the garden of Eden, and all traces of the ruin and desolation which war has left will be for ever obliterated.

The first visits to this part of our land are more frequently made for health than for pleasure; and, not realizing how many things indispensable at the North are unnecessary here, it is not strange that for a while one longs for "the flesh-pots of Egypt." With little or no expectation that it may be necessary to repeat the visit, there is no inducement for any special investigation as to the prudence, comfort, pleasure, or profit of securing a permanent winter residence in Florida.

Then, again, those who can be content and happy only in the excitements and enjoyments of fashionable life will never be attracted here, unless for a flying visit; and then, instead of learning anything of the country, they will be disposed to pass their time in a round of frivolous pleasures which can be easily found in many of the attractive and fashionable hotels. These are not the best places in which to learn all about the resources of Florida, and form a correct estimate of her wonderful capabilities. Unless such a life is the height of their desires and ambition, few will spend a second winter here—breathe this soft and balmy air, enjoy the brilliant flowers and lovely birds, and partake of the delicious fruits, and just begin to form some estimate of its natural advantages and vast resources—without being conscious that a strong attachment has been formed, and by and by a great desire to secure at least a winter residence here.

At present, however, while so much of all that was once most beautiful lies desolate in many parts of this country through the devastations of war, and so much money and labor will be needed to restore the waste places and revive the original loveliness, the growth of interest, mostly through transient visitors, must of necessity be much too slow for our impatience. Yet it is impossible to doubt that, with intelligently directed labor, it will be no herculean task to make the future of this fair land far transcend its former beauty and productiveness. So confident am I that great results are possible, it is difficult to "pos-

sess my soul in patience" till this work of rejuvenation begins to advance more rapidly.

But, while there is no spot on earth where the poor, if willing to work industriously (and they deserve little sympathy if they are not), can be made so comfortable, and with reasonable hopes of increasing prosperity with each coming year, still it is the young —those who are in search of some desirable spot on which to erect their altars, and build and consecrate "wedded love's first home"—who can do more than any other class to make this now sparsely settled country all that the Maker prepared it to be. It was with this class before my mind that I was planning and dreaming during all the long hours and days of weakness, in my first visit to Florida; and these dreams, I assuredly believe, will be in some degree realized and at no very distant day.

Oh! the many neat and comfortable homes that those who are just beginning their new and independent life could establish here, and with comparatively little expenditure of money! Ah! the homes with the promise of future independence for the honest but unfortunate poor, who are now suffering at the North, which I have planned in my wakeful hours during these long winter nights, when my Northern friends are trying to forget snow and ice and sleety winds in most unprofitable slumber! What if my castles do vanish in the morning? I shall build them again, and nothing can rob me of the faith that, not many years hence, in God's good time, a way will be provided by which my structures shall have firm and

abiding foundations, and these visions of the night no longer fade before the brightness of the rising sun.

To restore that which war has laid in ruins, and establish communications through which the productions of these regions will be sure of good markets, and amicable exchange become easy to all parts of our land, we must be largely indebted, no doubt, to the good and wise action of those in power. When unprincipled politicians, both North and South, shall have become entangled in the nets they have spread for the unwary, and, reaping the fruits of their own selfish follies, shall have been put aside for honest men to fill their places (for surely there are more than ten righteous men left to save our country)—men who will labor earnestly to establish good institutions of every kind, and secure every facility for rapid transportation and communication all over our land—*then* we may confidently hope to see developed the best moral elements as well as the full natural resources of this whole united country.

But while recognizing the great importance of co-operation and aid from our Government to secure the most speedy development of this and all other States in our Union, we also know that much can and must be done, by individual effort, while waiting for the tardy assistance of those in high places.

On my first visit to Florida I spent several weeks in a part of the State where I had the best opportunities of constantly observing what ignorance, neglect, and misfortune *had done*, and, by the contrast which

lay ever before me, realizing what education, good taste, and industry, with but very little money, can do. It was on the St. Mark's. The place was once deemed the Saratoga of Florida, but during the war had been almost entirely destroyed. Three years before my visit it was waste and barren; but from my window I could then see a large track of land well plowed, and neatly fenced, where grain and potatoes were covering the broad fields with rich green, and where the newly planted cotton and sugar-cane would before many days spring up with promise of abundant and remunerative harvest.

What had wrought this change? What had made this oasis in the desert? Three years before a feeble, gray-haired man, over whom the doctors had pronounced sentence of death, resolved to make one more effort for life, and try what Florida, instead of physicians, could do for him. He purchased the only orange-grove of any size that had survived the general desolation—an old grove, whose trees, moss-bound and covered with lichens, gave but faint promise of rejuvenation. The fences all around the place were tumbling down, gates off the hinges, and everything telling of neglect, desertion, and decay.

In the middle of the grove stood a long, rambling, one-story house, with many dilapidated out-buildings. It was evidently once among the aristocratic residences of the place, but, like the grove and surrounding property, was fast tending to ruin.

Here, sick and very feeble, the new owner began the work of rejuvenating both the property and him-

self—not by waiting for strength to come to him, but by *crawling*—for at first it was literally nothing more —out after it ; beginning by sitting in an easy-chair in the fields and giving directions to his hired men ; then, as fast as strength was gathered in, working with his own hands, at first only a few moments at a time, then stopping to rest.

So the first year sped by. Believing that strength is given for use, and, if employed with judgment, will take unto itself a double quantity, he daily "traded" with his small capital of strength, and found that it surely increased and multiplied with wonderful rapidity.

Three years later, at the time of our visit, we found this man vigorous and full of energy and resolute industry. The colored men in his employ would often stand in open-mouthed amazement when witnessing his untiring resolution, thus receiving a lesson in industry they sadly needed. Such lessons are by far more forcible and effective when taught by *deeds* rather than *words*. True, that race is slow to learn such lessons, but little by little they take root, and the growth is perhaps first seen in the increased care and neatness about their own humble homes and small gardens ; but in time this mode of teaching will develop lasting and effective industry.

Now, six years from the time when this gray-haired man with feeble steps began his work on a place which, like himself, seemed past renovating, you will not find anywhere a happier, more energetic man, or one who can easily accomplish so much labor ; or a

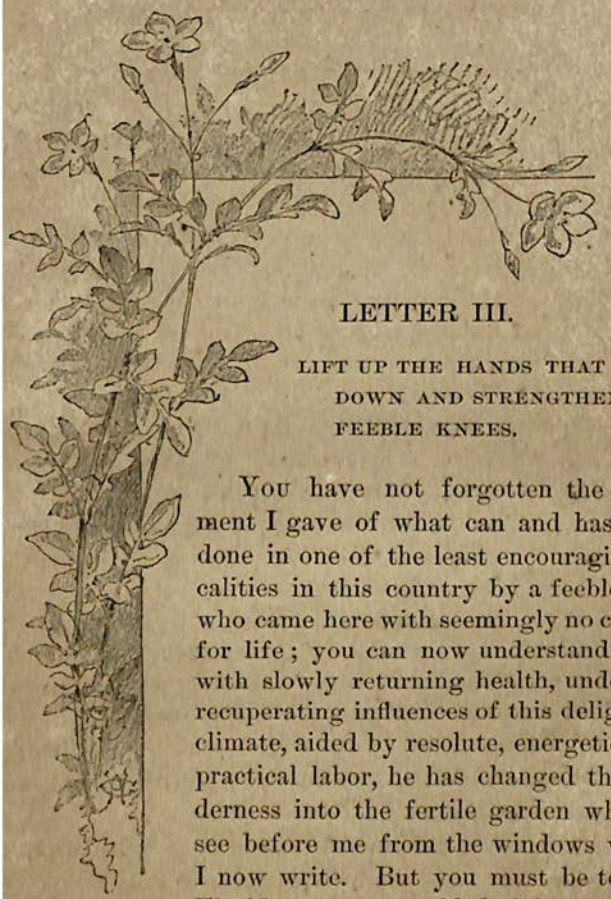
more flourishing orange-grove, or more neatly fenced and productive fields. The moss and lichens, the scale-insects, and other evils that were killing the groves, are all destroyed under this skillful management and wise administration; the trees, grown young and vigorous, are repaying their owner for his care by yielding the largest and most perfect fruit that can be seen anywhere.

But this man, whose life has been prolonged and strengthened for many years of usefulness by this wonderful climate, has not given his attention solely to orange-culture. He is testing the fertility and resources of Florida in every way that promises success and remuneration. He is raising sugar-cane, and making sugar and molasses from it, himself. Irish and sweet potatoes, and all kinds of vegetables and luxuries that belong to a well-kept farm, or plantation, receive the amount of attention that best promises or secures a plentiful harvest.

In the next letter I desire to show you the contrast between this earnest, systematic, intelligent kind of labor, and that careless surface work which never produces half that this soil can so readily be made to yield, and also bring to your notice the work which youth, strength, and firmer health have done toward building up a comfortable home, with every promise of ease and competency, for their mature manhood and their parents' declining years.

This one village, and the opportunities of improving it till it shall far outshine its best condition before the war, is only a sample of many others. Under-

stand that I make no pretense of giving you a *history* of Florida, but only, at your request, send you my *impressions*, and such positive knowledge as I gather from good authority, careful observation, and practical oversight of a few acres.



LETTER III.

LIFT UP THE HANDS THAT HANG DOWN AND STRENGTHEN THE FEEBLE KNEES.

You have not forgotten the statement I gave of what can and has been done in one of the least encouraging localities in this country by a feeble man who came here with seemingly no chance for life; you can now understand how, with slowly returning health, under the recuperating influences of this delightful climate, aided by resolute, energetic, and practical labor, he has changed the wilderness into the fertile garden which I see before me from the windows where I now write. But you must be told of Florida as you would find it were you here—the good and the bad—if you would gain a correct impression of this strangely beautiful country.

I have told you of my window-view. Now step out into the moonlight, as I have often done, from

among the orange-trees, or under the China-tree which overhangs the gate. Right before us lies the saddest thing that can be imagined, next to a desolate heart —a *deserted village.* Roofless churches, tenantless houses, all that fire and fierce bombardment left standing, rapidly falling to pieces; fenceless and untilled fields, groves of orange-trees, once white with perfumed blossoms, or golden with luscious fruit, now moss-grown, covered with lichens and other destructive parasites—the dead limbs more abundant than the living.

How often from such moonlight scenes have I returned to my room to spend many sleepless hours in trying to devise some practical scheme by which hundreds of the skillful and intelligent men and women, suffering for food and the bitter cold at the North, could be transplanted to this or many similar spots in Florida! Put some of our Northern sufferers, who are now walking our streets half starved or freezing, down here, set them to work, and they would show better than tongue or pen can describe what a few months of intelligent industry and skill can effect, even in a place which on first sight seems worthless and past reclaiming.

But bringing this land under proper cultivation, and redeeming it from the wilderness, is only a small part of the good which might be accomplished. Think of the incomparably more important good which would result from such divine charity. Men, women, and children saved from that cruel want and beggary, which so soon dwarfs and wellnigh destroys

a human being—eating away courage, energy, self-reliance, and independence! To lift up and purify, to encourage and ennoble any portion of the human race—is not that even a more blessed work than to repair the waste places of earth, and make "the wilderness bud and blossom like the rose"?

But think what it would be to unite the two labors! What nobler work can any one desire than to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, feed the hungry, find homes for the homeless, and transform into self-supporting men and women those who now overtax our sympathies and drain our purses, without securing any permanent relief. And add to all this that, by the very act of relieving these unfortunate people, the ruined villages are rebuilt, and the beauty and productiveness which God has given to this country are in a promising way to be richly developed.

But while such visions rise before one of what this land, now crippled and defaced by the ravages of war and the neglect that must follow it, might be made in a few years with proper care and resolute industry, and the hosts of sufferers that might be transformed into useful, happy citizens, one must not make the common mistake of supposing that this transformation can be effected without hard work—without much fatigue and some discouragements. Such drawbacks are met with in every pursuit, in every undertaking. Often many days of hard work are lost through inexperience; but such losses should teach lessons that seldom need to be repeated, and therefore such experience is not dearly purchased.

How small a proportion of what is given every month in careless or injudicious charity, or wasted in frivolous and unsatisfying pleasures, would support a whole family here, and, best of all, give them the first fair start toward independent, useful citizenship!

But something even better often springs from such wise investments. It is not simply finding food and shelter for the miserable; but, without some kind hand stretched out to save by securing a self-supporting position, many a family—buffeted and tossed about, gleaning a precarious living in the hardest possible way—has through want and discouragement sunk into a listless apathetic state, which leaves them an easy prey to the very worst temptations. Who will be obliged to pay the taxes which vice and crime impose on a community? Is it not a better economy to aid the poor and suffering to gain a foothold on a spot where, by industry, they can support themselves, and through such industry be redeemed, if helped in time, from a life of want and wretchedness, that may tempt to sin, that sooner or later will destroy both body and soul?

By raising up and repairing the doors of some of the half-destroyed houses in the waste places which war has left in Florida—by mending broken windows and neatly curtaining them—no longer allowing the blinds to swing on one hinge at the mercy of every wind that blows—how soon might one see a neat white-washed cottage peeping out from under the well-trimmed orange or shade trees! Why, a smart active

woman would not rest long until—alone, if it must be—she had brought some order out of this confusion, some beauty out of this decay! I know I should forget fatigue and suffering in the great pleasure of working out such transformation.

Do not think that Florida is full of deserted villages and moss-grown orange-groves. Some of the old villages still remain unoccupied, and are rapidly losing all semblance of anything that was probably once the homes of refined and wealthy people; but Northern enterprise and activity are improving and building up most of these waste places, and it will not be many years before these will become habitable, comfortable dwellings—if not stately mansions—and well-cultivated and productive orange-groves.

"But an effort to reclaim such old, half-dead trees as you have told of seems preposterous. I should prefer to grub up such unsightly objects, plant a young grove, and possess my soul in patience till they came to maturity."

That, begging your pardon, proves your ignorance as regards orange-culture. You have been told how only one year's skillful labor was repaid. I should have jumped to the same conclusion that you have when I first saw some of the long-neglected groves, gnarled and unsightly, with no promise of "a green old age"; but since then I have seen trees much more unpromising, rejuvenated. The orange, when well nurtured, grows more and more remunerative every year after it first commences bearing, quite down to old age; and even when neglected and abused for several

years, it quickly and gratefully responds to the first touch of kindness and proper care.

Scrape off the moss, remove the lichens, cut away all dead branches, wash and scrub the bark, plow carefully all through the grove, and enrich the ground with muck from the swamps and river banks—first having this muck properly mixed with ashes, lime, leaves, etc., and leaving it to be well combined—with, for a time, some *bone meal* spread over the ground and plowed in; and in a year or two an old half-decayed grove will amply repay the owner by a crop of bright and healthy fruit. If this care is continued, each year will increase the products of the trees; and your grandchildren may find this grove, once apparently so near death, a handsome legacy.

Bring down our Northern men who are begging for work, but finding none, and, as if by magic, not only will the work of re-creation go marching on, but new land will be broken up, young groves will be planted, and, where is now the wilderness, neatly fenced and well-tilled fields, rich in cane and cotton, will obliterate the intrenchments and earthworks, sad tokens of the war. Encroaching on the haunts of the deer and other wild animals, little hamlets will soon grow up, with broad streets, shaded by the rapidly growing trees that make these forests so lovely. The palmetto, magnolia, liquid-amber or gum-tree—the oak, elm, pine, and a countless variety of trees, which in Florida pass quickly from infancy to mature and vigorous age—would in a marvelously short time canopy the streets of these young villages with a grateful shade, that a

Northern settlement would willingly work years to secure.

Pretty settlements are springing up, not only along the banks of the St. John's, but around the beautiful inland lakes, where one family—and sometimes two or three—five or six years ago, felled the first trees and broke the ground in the midst of the forest, where never before had there been an acre of cleared land. Some of these, when I first went South, were isolated, and to an inexperienced eye gave little promise of any great comfort or success. I judged, as you did, ignorantly; for now orange-groves, just coming into bearing, are plenty all along the banks, and pleasant cottages and neatly clad women and children indicate that they have passed out of pioneer life into organized townships or pleasant villages, making steady progress year by year toward elegant and refined homes.

Many of these new settlements have been started by two or three brothers, leaving home to select the family homestead; and after clearing and fencing a few acres, getting in their first planting of vegetables, planting the seedlings or "sour stumps" for the young orange-groves, they exert their ingenuity to erect a neat, comfortable shelter for their parents and the younger portion of the family, who will join them when all this rough preliminary work has prepared the way for them.

Ah! if you could realize how very *truthful* all this is, which—shivering over your Northern coal fires—may possibly appear like exaggeration or rhapsody, you could better understand how very small a portion

of that wealth which is so idly squandered every week for that which satisfieth not, could make hundreds happy and self-supporting, who now go hungry and wretched to untimely graves, for the lack of a little assistance.

How often I have looked out on such places as have just been described—so full of promise if rightly entered upon—and in imagination appropriated (*by permission*) a part of the large sum a fashionable lady will spend on one party or ball—or, perhaps, a dinner in honor of some distinguished person who, in his heart, would gladly give half the sum to be excused from the infliction; then imagined the comfortable homes such sums would provide for some deserving but unfortunate families. How those families need just this which Florida holds, waiting for them! and, ah! how Florida needs that class of people whom we would so gladly send to her shores!

True, that which we build in the night watches of comfort and beauty is demolished by the rising sun. But what more substantial can the fashionable lady show after expending so large a sum on her fancies? Indeed, such dreamings as mine give a higher enjoyment, free from any of the inconvenience, fatigue, or heart-burnings which molest and irritate the fashionable lady. We are up with the sun, feeling hopeful that a good time will surely come, by which some of those dreams may be worked out into realities. She, jaded and wellnigh exhausted—her gold spent for that which satisfieth not—drags her aching limbs to her chamber just as night gives place to morning, per-

haps secures a few hours of most unsatisfying slumber, and rises discontented, envious, and unhappy. For the time being there may be one sort of pleasure in these large, suffocating, and expensive entertainments; but on retrospection, both for host and guests, the taste is too often like Jeremiah's figs—exceedingly bitter.

Please remember, this is not all idle dreaming. I have seen these transformations and improvements in places and persons here, and they are not extreme cases. All that you can justly call visionary is the supposition that those who are joined to their idols—who live only for their own selfish gratification—will ever be disposed to deny themselves one extra ribbon to help feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or provide a home for the unsheltered wanderer.

Our hope rests chiefly with those who find pleasure and comfort in helping the weary and heavy-laden—who only wait to see the open door, to step to the front in all acts of kindness. For the young it is an excellent incentive to secure a homestead and begin on new land; for they can afford to *take time*—to begin at the beginning, and have what would be to me the great satisfaction of feeling that they had wrested a home from out of the wilderness, and built it up from the foundation by perseverance, energy, and solid labor. But for the feeble and aged there are many places in some of the deserted villages where, for a small sum, they can at once secure some old plantation, or a few acres, that, although neglected and tending to decay, can very soon be made sufficiently

comfortable to shelter them at once, and by their own skill, little by little, be made a neat and pleasant home.

Newport, on the St. Mark's, the west side of Florida, is one of these spots—given up by those of its former inhabitants who still live; and yet the tenantless, dilapidated houses, and fields run to waste, could soon be rejuvenated and be made productive, if there was any one with intelligence and industry to occupy and improve. To prove that my statement rests on more substantial foundations than a woman's imagination, listen while I give you one example. In that one place alone there are many others of the same general character, but one will suffice.

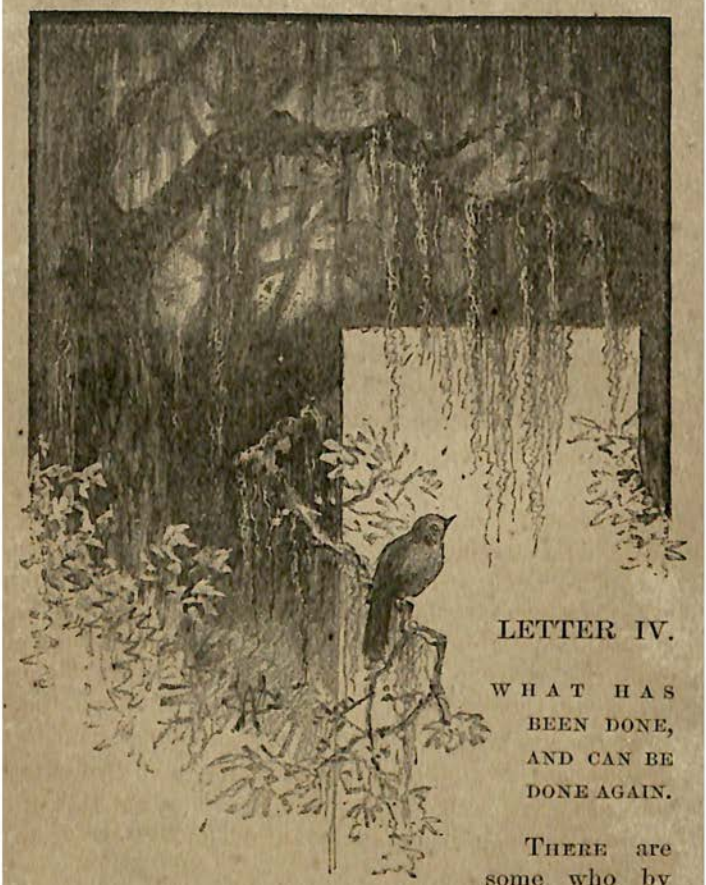
Just across the street from the plantation described in my first letter, there are two small cottages, better preserved than most of those lying vacant in that vicinity. The owners being scattered or dead, and the heirs making homes or in business elsewhere, both places, since the war, have stood empty and neglected. Each cottage has four good-sized rooms, with spacious fireplaces in each; for, wood being abundant, there is no need of close economy in fuel. A latticed veranda separates the kitchen, store-rooms, and servants' rooms from the main building. A cemented cistern or reservoir of ample size is in the rear. A good barn, hen-house, and yard, all pertain to each place. There are a few young orange-trees just coming into bearing, pecan-trees, peaches, figs, grapes, and a few young apple-trees in good condition. Cape jessamine, crape myrtle, roses, and many other flowers made the places

bright and attractive, even with all the marks of neglect which they could not entirely conceal.

The land on which these two cottages stand occupies one large square—I do not recollect the measure in rods or acres—each house owning half of the land. The heir of one of these places not being of age, it can not yet be sold; but the other was purchased, to prevent its being occupied by tramps or rovers, to the detriment of a friend. The price given was *one hundred dollars!* The purchaser, having other property in Florida, was ready to sell it whenever an active, energetic person should be found, who would be public-spirited enough to help reclaim and build up this village. In less than a year it was sold again for *three hundred dollars!* Now it is a pretty home; and, though small, if the new owner proves intelligent, active, and enterprising, the cotton, cane, and sweet potatoes which could be raised on the place will in a short time return the sum he gave for the whole; and then he will be in a condition to extend his land to any extent at a simple nominal price.

This is but one case. Only men and money to cultivate and improve the land are wanted to make this region rich in productiveness and as lovely as fairy land. Men begging only for work are scattered all over the North. Is there none among those who are annoyed and oppressed by the continued importunity of the destitute, who, even if they "fear not God nor regard man," will give of their abundance even so liberally as to send these claimants where work can be obtained, if only to free themselves from their importunity?

Do, you complain that this gives you little information about Florida? Well, be patient. It was not a history that you requested—only the *impressions* that yearly visits to a land dearly loved have made on my own mind—impressions which I feel confident do not differ materially from well-authenticated facts, although I alone am responsible for what I write. Three or four years' steady efforts of earnest laborers have shown results that are almost like fairy-land tales. I write *con amore*, and therefore "hasten slowly," making perhaps the common mistake of thinking that what interests one most deeply must have the same attractions for all.



LETTER IV.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE, AND CAN BE DONE AGAIN.

THERE are some who by marriage step at once into elegant homes, and without exertion on their part are provided with an ample income and, as far as wealth and social position can

secure it, have every prospect of gliding through life "on the smooth surface of a summer sea." These are not likely to find any great attractions in Florida, or only those which tourists and pleasure-seekers are expected to find in any new scenes. To be sure, some, with all that wealth can give, may be compelled to make this country their residence, or die. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." But if for this cause they settle here, their riches will cheat them out of half the true enjoyment those will find who come ready to *work* and build up—not to be waited upon and lead useless, self-indulgent lives.

We do not look to this class with any hope that they will develop the wonderful, unlimited resources of Florida. To be sure, their money, if liberally used, will greatly assist others to open up all that now lies dormant here. But we look most hopefully to those who, having less of this world's goods, are forced to begin life in earnest, and with no expectations but such as their own energy and industry will insure. And this class, if they have vigor, earnestness, and courage, with "all the world before them where to choose," will need no pity. They will be none the less happy for the lack of *ready-made* money, if they are sensible enough to understand that life was not given to be all play and romance, but full of various duties, to be gradually unfolded and developed in God's own good time.

If, when young people come to years of maturity, and are ready to make a home of their own, they will begin this new life with the full determination to ac-

cept these duties as they rise, and, confident in their Father's wisdom, endeavor to perform them faithfully, they will soon learn how full of choicest blessings, waiting to be garnered all along the unknown, untried way, is a life of diligent courageous effort.

The young are often perplexed with unforeseen obstacles and discouragements at the very threshold of their new and independent life. Their perplexities frequently spring from the attempt to build up their own future on the old foundations which their fathers laid. These were doubtless wisely planned, and well adapted to the period when their ancestors began the work; and, under the then existing circumstances, no doubt the best that could have been devised. But, as years roll on, many changes incident to a rapidly growing population unfolded better ways, and gradually made the old ways distasteful and irksome. This becoming more and more evident, and the growing discontent and loss of faith in the old-time methods becoming burdensome, it would be wise for young people to relinquish the idea of settling close by large towns and cities, unless their bank accounts are heavy and their prospects of success are past a doubt. It is ruinous to remain in familiar localities, hampered by the old methods, endeavoring to force their way, till all they possess is wasted in the useless struggle to find a firm and permanent foothold.

Let the young folks, therefore, who have little but their own strong hands and well-cultured brains to depend on, leave the old places that only rich men can keep in a productive condition, and go forth to

create a home in newer lands, where intelligent labor, stanch integrity, and the unselfish desire to do good to all around them will make their presence a blessing, and insure themselves an honorable position and influence. By acting under such incentives, their good influence may remain to comfort and strengthen others long after these pioneers have gone to receive the joyful "Well done, good and faithful servant." For all who are ready thus to begin an independent life, and establish their future from the foundations, there is no place within my knowledge where this can be so easily, rapidly, and successfully accomplished as in this State.

I promised you some examples of what I know has been done here, and can be done again. I have told you what improvements a sick and feeble old man had wrought in a few years on an old and miserably dilapidated plantation, and will now attempt to explain what younger and more robust men can do in new lands, when undaunted by such hardships as must inevitably be met by pioneers in every new undertaking.

About seven years since three brothers left their Northern home on a prospecting tour through Florida, intending, if suited, to "enter a homestead" and prepare a comfortable home for their parents and sister as rapidly as possible. After visiting many localities, they selected a quarter section of Government land near Little Lake George, through which the St. John's River runs. These young men had not been accustomed to farming or the use of carpenter's tools, nor were they familiar with any of those kinds of labor

necessary to carry out their plans. But they took with them a chest of tools, well stocked with all that might be needed, and a good supply of farming utensils. All this shows that they were smart, intelligent, hopeful, and courageous young men. None other should or would venture on such an experiment.

After the locality was decided upon, their first work was to build a log house for their own shelter. This was easily done. Then several acres were cleared, fenced in, and a large number of *sour-orange stumps* set out to be ready for grafting the next spring, or when the roots were well established; and beside these a large quantity of sweet-orange seeds were planted, to start a seedling grove. This is an important consideration for all new-comers, as these young groves should be growing while the owners are giving time and attention to immediately necessary work. The grass started, corn, sweet and Irish potatoes, and other important crops were then planted, to be ready for early use when those anxiously waiting at the North should come to them.

Having labored to get all these things safely under way, and in a prosperous condition, the next step was to build a more comfortable and commodious dwelling, and make everything about the place as home-like and attractive as possible for the parents and sister. Undeterred by lack of mechanical knowledge, and determined as far as possible to supply this want by good common sense, and that skill which is born of persevering efforts, they prepared a plan of a house, which they developed with most encouraging success; and

rapidly, under their united efforts, rose as neat and convenient a cottage as could be desired. A broad hall the whole length of the house, a pleasant parlor, a comfortable dining-room, and six bedrooms gave ample accommodations for the whole family and a generous provision for guests.

In accordance with the Southern custom (a most sensible arrangement, and one which would add greatly to the comfort of any family), the kitchen, store-rooms, and servants' room were built separate from the house, but connected by a latticed veranda, with a roof to protect from sun and rain; and thus all cooking fumes were kept away from the house. The molding and fine work, it is true, were not finished by an accomplished carpenter; but I spent some days, a short time since, with this most kind and hospitable family, and could be well content to spend my days in as neat and comfortable a dwelling.

When all was arranged, the rest of the family joined those who had so speedily and energetically prepared a home for them in the midst of the forest. Before leaving the North, the sister sold her piano, and invested the money in dry goods and groceries; and on reaching her Southern home, the log house that had been the brothers' abode was enlarged and suitably fitted up for a store, of which the young lady had the sole charge.

Now, at the close of seven years, this family have a pretty property and a comfortable home, which they are constantly improving. A large part of their orange-trees are mostly sweet seedlings, which, until

within a short time, it was supposed could never come into bearing for eight or ten years; but they are thought to be safer in case of frost than the grafted sour stump. Later experience, however, proves that, by grafting the sweet seedlings, they can be brought into bearing almost if not quite as early as the sour stump—that is to say, when between four and five years old. This enterprising family have now a large number of orange, lemon, guava, and fig trees, as well as a choice collection of grapes, and raise successfully cotton, sugar, corn, melons, potatoes, and all needed vegetables for their own use as well as for sale.

In all these years they have not paid one penny for hired help, but have done many days' work for others. Two of the sons, in addition to their home labor, superintend and do a large share of the work on two or three neighboring plantations, where they are considered invaluable. With all this amount of hard labor and breaking up new land, which is usually thought unhealthy, they have been blessed with perfect health, and have never employed a physician. Does any one need a better warrant for the healthiness of Florida?

This is only one example out of very many that have come under my own immediate observation, and is given to illustrate how liberally this beautiful land will recompense honest and intelligent labor, and what pleasant and comfortable homes she gives to those who trust her generosity.

"But while waiting for newly planted orange-groves, and fruit-trees of every variety, to become

profitable, what are the prospects of support for the new settler during these five or six years?"

Ample. If one settles near some plantation owned by those whose business will not allow them to live on it, and can secure the superintendence of such a place, he is fortunate; for the pioneer, who intends to live on his own land, can take charge of the stranger's plantation, and be paid in money, or half the crops he can raise on it, and at the same time push his own work forward. In this way he will secure a good support for his family till such time as his own grounds are cleared and planted. If no such place is near of access, he will not starve or suffer any hard deprivation.

Every one on coming out should take such canned meats and vegetables as he can, and flour and vegetables will be found within marketing distance to help through till the crops are well under way, and some ready for use. All kinds of vegetables that can be desired are easily raised. Florida beef and pork are proverbially poor, but it should not be so. A Northern farmer would soon prove that good pork and beef are as possible here as at the North. But it takes time to bring about any desirable change, and till then our new-comers can easily be content with a poor quality. The experiment of using this a year or so will only make them more determined to introduce a better quality as soon as they can.

But there is no necessity of suffering from want, even with poor beef and pork, so long as the beautiful rivers and lakes abound with fish, and the woods are

full of game. There was never a spot at the North where one can have chickens, ducks, and turkeys, and abundance of eggs, with very trifling effort, so plentifully as in this country. And until there is time to arrange a poultry house and yard on a large scale, what better food can any one desire than the delicious wild turkey, duck, partridges, quail, and any variety of small but most tempting birds, which are so easily trapped or snared? And *the venison!* Here the danger is that the excellence of the wild meats will tempt those who are in haste to bring their land into good condition, to delay the work of improving *beef and pork*, or, except for the luxury of having milk in plenty, forgetting to care for their cows.

"Do you think—although there may and must be some hardships to be encountered in taking the preliminary steps for a home here—*do you* think any need suffer from hunger, unless too lazy to open their mouths and receive the good things a bountiful Providence provides?"

There are many fruits also that come to maturity earlier than the orange. The fig is a rapid grower, and as easily propagated as the currant, and begins to bear as early after well started. The fresh fruit will not bear transportation to the North, but it is a great comfort for those who raise it. Almost every hut or house, for black or white, has its fig-trees, if it have nothing more. When freshly gathered, the fruit is very healthy and nourishing, and none need be told what a luxury it is when properly dried or preserved. The guava is also a rapid grower, and the fresh fruit,

I am told, is very fine. The jelly and marmalade made from the guava needs no endorsement.

Strawberries, if well cared for, are to be had from early winter till late spring, or, indeed, into summer. Blackberries (wild) are abundant, and so fine that to cultivate them would be a waste of time. I saw acres of ripening, wild blackberries in a neighboring plantation, and heard the proprietor give orders to an old colored "auntie" to pick one hundred quarts for a lady to preserve the next day. When the hundred quarts were gathered, none could tell by the looks of the bushes that any had been taken. The huckleberry abounds in the woods in every direction. The cassava root is easily raised, and is used boiled like a potato, or made into starch or into flour, from which various kinds of cakes are made. The peanut is also an easily raised and profitable crop. And in the extreme southern part of Florida almost any kind of fruit that can be found in the tropics can be cultivated and made remunerative.

Time would fail to enumerate all the fruits, vegetables, nuts, etc., that Florida will yield bountifully to those who accept her favors, and are ready to bring them forward with skill and industry; but she has no promises for those who will not help themselves.

In "entering a homestead," it is not wise to attempt to clear a large amount of land at first, or in clearing to cut down all the forest trees. Some of the forest trees should be preserved in clusters of six or eight, according to the character of the tree, both for beauty and to protect the young orange groves from

83763

the wind, and from all danger of frost. There is seldom any frost, but occasionally a cold snap warns the orange-grower to be careful, and the experience of those who have groves well advanced is that those lands where all the trees are cut off suffer most, both from frost and winds. The land being thus exposed, the sun sucks up all the moisture that the young growth needs, and injures if not quite destroys it. It is sad to see large tracts of land, like a desert, without any shade-trees left, when the fields and crops would be so much benefited by them, aside from the great pleasure one derives from the grand and beautiful trees. The eagerness to get the land in a productive state in the shortest possible time sometimes blinds the judgment. True, the growth of all things here is so rapid, that new trees from the old roots soon cover a cleared field if allowed to; but nothing can replace the giant trees that for centuries have been the patriarchs of the forest. And added to the regret for their loss is also the thought that, if so little judgment is used in destroying the forests, it will not be long before the fuel now so plentiful will be greatly needed.

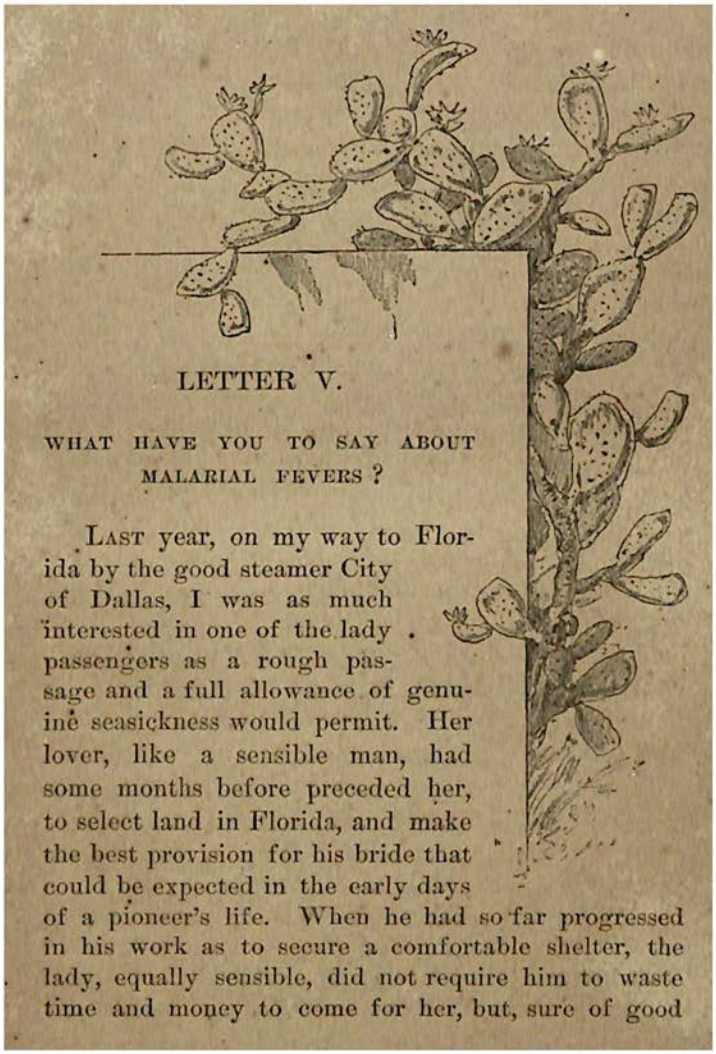
A sensible man will clear only so much land as can be properly cultivated, set out as many oranges as the working force which he has on hand can *bud* or graft, and give all needed care; then start a nursery by planting seeds. This done, the vegetables or other varieties of fruits will claim his care.

But, as a homestead embraces one hundred and sixty acres, and only a small part of it should be under

cultivation—say fifteen to twenty acres—all these other acres must not be left profitless.

Georgian cattle are a good investment. If one has a little money that can be spared, this gives good promise of returning it fourfold in a few months. These cattle are bought for five and six dollars a head. When brought to the homestead they may be fed for a day or two, and then "branded" and turned loose to range the woods belonging to the place, or, if they please, in miles of uncleared land. Bring them home at night a few times, throw a little corn into the inclosure, and they will soon learn to return from their wanderings every night of their own will. This is called *cow-penning* them; and, after orange-trees attain a good growth, this "pen" should be around the trees, for cattle thus penned every night are of great benefit in enriching the ground, and will bring forward the trees faster than any other mode of fertilizing and will do no harm to the trees. In the fall these cattle, having become quite fat on the wild grass in the woods, can be sold for twenty or thirty dollars a head.

You have given me an exhausting theme, and where to find a stopping-place it is difficult to tell. I meant to have finished in this letter, and to have told you of this old settlement at Rollestown, and of several other places, of the Medicinal Springs, etc., etc., but will try and bring all I wish to say—no, that would not be possible—but all that I can not refrain from saying, into my next letter.



LETTER V.

WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY ABOUT MALARIAL FEVERS?

LAST year, on my way to Florida by the good steamer City of Dallas, I was as much interested in one of the lady passengers as a rough passage and a full allowance of genuine seasickness would permit. Her lover, like a sensible man, had some months before preceded her, to select land in Florida, and make the best provision for his bride that could be expected in the early days of a pioneer's life. When he had so far progressed in his work as to secure a comfortable shelter, the lady, equally sensible, did not require him to waste time and money to come for her, but, sure of good

care and all needed attentions from Captain Hines, and every comfort that he had power to provide, she came without any escort to meet her lover at Jacksonville. Here she was married in a simple, quiet manner, and left that same evening for her new home.

Some few months since I received a letter from this lady, from which I had intended to copy largely, as an excellent corroboration of my own ideas of what willing hands and courageous hearts may hope for, if they are led to make a home in Florida. But I have lost the letter, and regret it all the more, as I had planned to visit this lady, as requested, and be able to compare a pioneer's life in Florida with my own experience of early Western life. I can now recall neither her new name nor her location; but somewhere not very far above Little Lake George, she found a comfortable log cabin, or house, ready for her. She told me the number of acres her husband had already cleared and planted. The orange seedlings were just starting, and "sour stumps" for grafting were set out and thriving. She spoke of the quiet pleasures of her simple housekeeping—the flowers brought from the North, that were vieing in beauty with the wild plants and vines she had transplanted to brighten and beautify her rustic home, with an earnestness that proved her a fit wife for an enterprising pioneer.

Her chickens and other poultry were also a source of great pride to her, and deservedly, as she had been very successful in rearing them, and even in this short time had quite a flock. Chickens, eggs, and the

canned meats and fruits she brought from the North, were an important item now, while everything was in a formative state. To be sure, her husband occasionally brought in game, but had little time for hunting while his trees and crops were needing constant care. But this wife was strong and fearless, and in early girlhood had learned to handle the oars expertly—a good thing for every young lady to understand. There may come a time when not only her own life, but that of many others, may depend on her knowledge of this accomplishment. After the morning work was over indoors, this lady either worked in the garden near her husband, or, before the sun was too powerful, launched her boat and went alone on to the beautiful lake, to provide a fine fish, fresh from the water, for their dinner.

Before leaving the North, she had furnished herself bountifully with a good supply of choice reading, and, when needing rest, enjoyed them while swinging in her hammock under the grand old trees that surround the little house, now fast blossoming into beauty; while several well-cleared fields near by already manifested the marvelous power of industry intelligently applied. In the evenings her husband read to her, when she was busy with her needle.

The letter was so fresh and evidently truthful, that I longed to roll back the wheels of time and begin life anew, in a land so rich in resources, and so bountiful in repaying the labor bestowed upon it.

Another lady, bound for Florida, was also with us during this same voyage—a married lady, with two

little children, one a babe in the arms, the other six or seven years old. She had come, with no escort, from beyond Chicago, I think, and was going somewhere near Smyrna, on the Indian River. Her husband and son had been there some months, clearing the land and building the house that was soon to receive her and her weary little ones. She talked as if she was well posted in all the hardships and many inconveniences she would probably encounter. A slight, pale woman, but in nowise disheartened after the storm and seasickness were over. Her husband had wisely kept her thoroughly informed of all he had experienced, and what she might expect, and his description of the country and climate disarmed the new life of all terrors.

These are the right kind of men and women to make Florida all she can and should be.

"But what about the sickly summers, the malarial fevers? Is there nothing to be feared from this source?"

Certainly. Where will you find a spot in which one can not conjure up all sorts of terrors, if he prefers to live in perpetual fear of what *may* happen? There is almost as much to feed such weakness as may be found in any country. But why not inquire about the "chills," congestive, typhoid, and the other varieties of fever—of the acute diseases, pleurisy, pneumonia, diphtheria, and a multitude of ailments, seldom if ever known in Florida, but of daily occurrence in New York and Brooklyn—all along the banks of the lovely Hudson and Connecticut, and other riv-

ers—or wherever a new railroad is being built, or a public park in the first stages of construction and excavation—even up among the frosts and snows of the White Mountains? These afflictions, of daily occurrence throughout our country, are not supposed to be sufficient to deter people from settling North, East, or West, any more than the record of fearful crimes constantly committed in all large cities, or the reproaches, insinuations, bad temper, and violence, so common with both parties in times of political excitement, scare people from seeking a home in our cities.

But if Florida, or the South generally, catches the echo of political recrimination, and answers back in the same unchristian tone, *that* "is awful wicked!" Yes, it is wicked, *North* or *South*. But we have not seen or heard half as much here of *political* or *climatic malaria* as is transpiring weekly at the North. The cause or remedy of the *first* it is not our business to give, but there are a few things to be said of the latter.

Those who will be careless about unprotected exposure to the early morning air before eating, or before the sun is fully up, almost anywhere, and especially where there are river fogs, will be likely to find a fever of some kind close by. I don't think many of the present generation in our cities will suffer much from any exposure *before sunrise*. But our new settlers can not allow the sun to find them napping. If a cup of hot tea or coffee, or a little bread and butter, is taken before going out, then we should feel no fear of any harm from the *morning* air anywhere.

Careless exposure to *night* air—tempted by a beau-

tiful moon and pleasant company, a moonlight sail, night-hunting or fishing—is not safe, unless well protected with extra wraps, even on a summer's evening, *in any country or clime that I know of.*

The greatest danger will be found while the forests are cleared from new lands, and the new fields plowed for the first time *after* warm summer weather sets in. This, also, holds good anywhere, North or South, wherever woodland is broken up for cultivation. Do we not find chills, malarial fevers, etc., follow closely after every new railroad or park that is made? For this reason it is much better to have the land cleared and exposed to the sun early in the fall, in cool or cold weather. If possible, a temporary dwelling should be obtained at some little distance from where the clearing is going on, until the sun and air dispel the unhealthy dampness that must rise for some weeks, while the newly-turned earth is becoming "ripe" and sweet, and bogs and morasses have been well drained. If this is done, it is perfectly safe to prepare the dwelling and commence the true home life.

If there are no buildings near to take shelter in, the new-comers must run the risk, but take every precaution possible, and protect the body with suitable changes both in the morning and evening. Keep on hand always some light brushwood, and start an open fire the moment one is out of bed in the morning (only a bright, quick blaze), and it will prove a great protection from malaria in old or new land; and this should be done if there is any fog or

dampness, even in the hottest days of July, not in Florida alone, but everywhere, in old or new settlements.

In short, I don't believe that there is any more danger from malarial fevers in Florida (and that is about all the sickness that there is ever here) than in any State in the Union where woodland is being cleared, or old pastures and mowing-lots ripped up by the plow and the under-earth brought to the surface, or where *muck* is drawn from swamps or river-beds and piled near dwellings, to ripen for compost. I know, in the wonderful healthy town of Peekskill, New York State, muck was dug out of a swamp some years ago, and piled up to drain and sweeten before hauling up to the farm; and the family nearest to the swamp complained that they all had, or were threatened with, chills and fever in consequence. It cost the owner of the swamp one hundred dollars to stop that *malaria*. Strange what medicinal power can, when convenient, be found in one hundred dollars! And all along the lowlands on the banks of the Hudson, or wherever a new railroad is begun, chills and fever are prevalent, and to be expected as a matter of course. But this does not necessarily make that State or country where they occur unsafe or dangerously unhealthy. Chills and fevers are not desirable companions; I have had a thorough knowledge of them; but they are not half so unsafe as many diseases that are very common at the North.

"Well, you don't seem willing to give Florida all the fevers and malarial troubles, but you will not deny

that poisonous snakes and dangerous animals abound there?"

Oh, no, I will not deny that they are found in Florida (*abound* is rather too strong a word); but I must remind you that this is the natural order of things everywhere, until man cuts down the forests, drains the swamps, and brings the earth into subjection to his skill. It is not peculiar to one State or country, but to all that are densely wooded and sparsely settled.

The moccasin and rattlesnake are not so attractive and amiable that one would desire them for household pets, but they are no more deadly in Florida than elsewhere; and you know they are found occasionally in almost all localities. I knew and heard very little about them when here. It was only after returning home that the fearful dangers I had escaped were revealed. I have seen but one moccasin, and not one rattlesnake, except *in a cage*. The colored people, who would be the most likely to know the worst that is to be told of them, appear to give themselves no uneasiness about the serpents or animals that are supposed to make traveling, or walking in the forest, unsafe.

"Aunt Kitty," who for years has done the family washing where I am, walks two miles through the woods every Monday to come here, and *after dark* returns alone, but says she has never been molested, and has no fears. She would not like to come upon a rattlesnake unawares, but thinks a little caution is all that is needed.

The first year I was in Florida, on the St. Mark's,

an opossum was caught in the night, making trouble in the hen-house. The next morning a little, bright-eyed colored boy, of eight or nine years, lay on his back watching the animal, who was confined to a stake in the yard.

"Well, Smart, did you ever see a 'possum before?"

"Oh, 'es 'em."

"What do you do when you find them?"

"I'ze kills 'em."

"Did you ever see a coon?"

"Oh, 'es 'em."

"Well, what do you do with *them?*"

"*I'ze leaves!*"

"Did you ever come across a moccasin in the woods?"

"'Es em."

"What do you do then?"

"I'ze kills 'em," said he, with a merry laugh.

"Did you ever meet a rattlesnake?"

"'Es 'em."

"What do you do then, my boy?"

"I'ze leaves *quick!*"

Mosquitoes are no worse here than in large cities North, but *we are told* they are more troublesome still farther South. It may be so. I have been annoyed by the black or sand fly here, but no more than I am every fall when at the White Mountains. They are very provoking and annoying, however, and we have not one word to say in their behalf. They are a nuisance wherever found, but the comfort is that their time is short.

Do not think I am only giving you one-sided statements. I would not have you think that I imagine Florida the very Garden of Eden before the fall, with the serpent and all other disagreeable things left out. Not so at all: I only wish you to see it as it is, with many faults, many drawbacks, that prevent perfection; but none of them in a worse or more aggravated form than is common to all lands, and very few that skill and labor cannot remove entirely.

Please to bear this in mind, and remember also that there are, for the sick, the feeble, and the poor, hopes and comforts that our dear but less genial North can not offer. Here is cheaper land, no frost or cold at any season of the year to prevent outdoor labor, and the soil and seasons both able to give two or three remunerative crops a year, aside from the luxury of almost every variety of tropical fruits. The obstacles that must be annoying to every new settler are such as will of necessity be found in every spot where man begins to reclaim primeval forests, and turn them into productive fields and comfortable homes.

No sensible persons will come to "enter" new lands here, with the intention of making it a permanent home, without being prepared to feel the loss of many of the comforts and privileges that they have been accustomed to from childhood—the circle of friends that have grown up with them, the church relations, and, if they have children, the lack of schools and seminaries. In counting the cost, all these must be added to the amount, and the legitimate effect of this important calculation should be to strengthen their

determination to give time and thought toward building up and sustaining everything that tends toward moral and religious strength, as well as to cultivate and improve the soil.

But one who settles here must remember that there will naturally be more discomforts and perplexities the first year than in succeeding years. The promise is surer here than in many other new places, that the wilderness can be made to bud and blossom like the rose; but, as I have somewhere heard the remark, "this can not be done in a day or a year. You can sit under your own vine and fig-tree, with none to molest or make you afraid; but the vine and the fig must first be planted, matured, and tended."

In this united labor of improving and cultivating Florida, I believe that the old prejudices between the North and the South will wear away, and a common interest be established, by which each will employ their best faculties to accomplish the desired work. Each will bring to the work their own individual improvements and excellences, until the two, harmoniously laboring for the same end, will have put in practice the best, most rapid, and reliable modes of developing the naturally rich and wonderful resources of this State.

Many vegetables and greens that hitherto have not been thought capable of culture will yet be successfully raised here; and implements that it has been thought could not be used in Southern culture will be found, on trial, of invaluable service.

There is one other comfort that I would be glad to

see more extensively used, and which those who come here in straitened circumstances should be sure to introduce: I would like to see the *goat* raised more extensively. The stock of cattle is for the present very inferior, and "poor Florida beef" is a common expression. Of course, this being true, a sufficient supply of milk will also be very difficult to secure at first, from poor cows. It will soon be seen that there are many kinds of grass that can by cultivation be raised here, and a better food be given to the cattle. In return, they will give better and more abundant milk. But it will take some years to succeed in this, and, till accomplished, the goat will be an excellent substitute.

This animal can be raised in Florida with no care or trouble, or so little as not to be noticed. Goats are easily kept; the waste from the kitchens will be much more pleasantly and serviceably used for them, than in raising swine. Their milk is the richest and most nutritious of any animal, and, if tethered, so as not to browse on every coarse and disagreeable shrub, it can be had entirely free from the strong flavor that is so offensive. No poor man should attempt to tide over the two or three first years in Florida without a small herd of goats, or two or three at least. The flesh of the kid is said to be very delicate. A few goats can be bought for a small price, and will add greatly to the comfort of a pioneer's family.

The milk and flesh is of great value for invalids. No hotel in Florida should be without them for those who come here for health; and aside from that, with a little care and skill, they may be made exceedingly

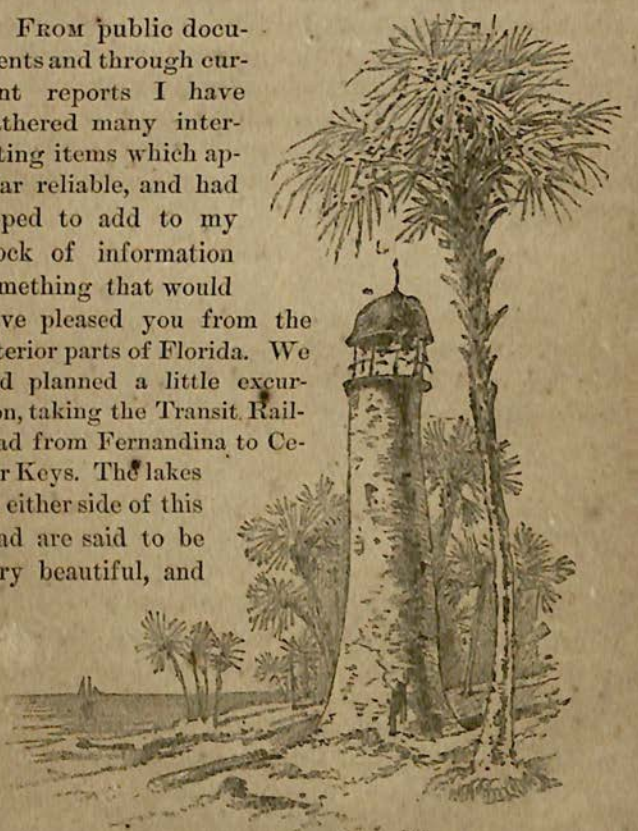
remunerative ; for the finest of the Thibet and Asiatic goats can be raised here, and their long silken fleeces sell for a high price.

You have, I fear, had more of Florida than you will find interest in ; but I will trouble you with only one more letter, if I can help it. The theme is to me of great interest ; and the longer I think of it, the broader it stretches out before me and tempts me on.

I would like to tell you a little of one place where I have lately visited, and where I expect to be when I write next, and will then trouble you no further, perhaps.

LETTER VI.

SEEK THE TRUTH IN PRIVATE HOMES, NOT IN HOTEL LIFE.



From public documents and through current reports I have gathered many interesting items which appear reliable, and had hoped to add to my stock of information something that would have pleased you from the interior parts of Florida. We had planned a little excursion, taking the Transit Railroad from Fernandina to Cedar Keys. The lakes on either side of this road are said to be very beautiful, and

the surrounding country around Lake Santa Fé, Sampson, and Kingsley, is *high land*, or "*bluffs*"—fertile, not foggy and damp, and very salubrious and delightful. Having dreamed over these pleasant descriptions, I was quite eager to see with my own eyes, and test the truth of what I had heard. But "the best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley;" and on reaching Baldwin, the morning trains had just been discontinued for the season, and by this change I should be subject to many delays and inconveniences. So that pleasure must be laid aside for another winter; and, before speaking of Rollestown, permit a few words which should have been added to the last letter.

Letters requesting more minute particulars about Florida are received daily; and I am therefore more than ever anxious to give no false impressions, but would avoid the injury done by those who, on transient visits, publish "overwrought, visionary letters." In their enthusiasm they are tempted to paint only the brightest side of the picture, overlooking the real, practical, stubborn facts in the case, which those who come every winter, or have become residents, see and fully understand.

I have endeavored not to err in that direction, and honestly do not think I have. It is not Florida as she *now* is, but what I truly believe she can be made, that I have endeavored to show; and, with her natural advantages of soil and climate, this change can be effected much more readily than in most new lands.

Of course, I take it for granted that the readers' good sense will teach them that the work which must

be done to secure good results can not be accomplished without some hardship and much self-denial. How severely either of these may press upon the new settler will depend largely on the strength, energy, and natural capacity of those who undertake the initiative labor.

Florida is most truly a "new State," because, after incredible rebuffs and disasters, she is once again struggling to rise above the many obstacles that have so often well-nigh destroyed her. She has been tossed about from one nation to another like a foot-ball; but of her history we will speak presently. Just now we desire to make it plain that here, as elsewhere, *first steps* are always surrounded with hardships, and often —like a little child learning to walk—one rises for a moment, but to fall again, and so on, till the way becomes familiar and easy.

"The hardy pioneer, who forces his way into the wilds of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and other parts of our Western States, will tell you that when one decides to locate in new or wild lands and begins to reclaim them, he must make up his mind that for two or three years a rough life, with many inconveniences and hardships, chill or ague, and other ailments, are before him; that it is a close fight, a sturdy determination to grapple with and subdue the wilderness;" but he must bear in mind and take courage from the knowledge that, having conquered, the reward is close at hand. It is strange that so many people who are really sensible in most things, making the attempt to settle here or elsewhere, are entirely ignorant of this. They come

expecting to find Florida "one vast flower-garden or orange-grove by nature, needing no labor or cultivation," and that, without a Joshua to lead, they have but to pass over and possess the promised land, and at once, without any exertion on their part, sit down under their own vine and fig-tree, with none to molest or make them afraid. But "the truth is, this lovely land is but a wilderness as yet, and those who would have the garden and the grove, must come and *make them.*"

"Is Florida a healthy State?" is a frequent question.

"The sanitary reports of the army show a much greater degree of health among the soldiers in Florida during the late war, and previously among the troops stationed here, than in any other section of the Union; and the prevailing disease, *intermittent fever*, is of a much less virulent type than in most new countries. This does not prove, however, that there is no sickness here. There certainly is; but it is also perfectly true that the healthfulness of Florida is fully equal to that of any other State in our Union."

I have quoted from the best authority; but there is one point not mentioned, so far as I have been able to learn, in *any report*, but which I think it but common justice to refer to; for it touches on an objection often made against coming here for health or with any hope of retaining and securing what one has.

I can better illustrate my meaning by putting into shape conversations that one often hears when going up and down the St. John's River, or crossing over to

Jacksonville, where friends and acquaintances have met unexpectedly. Now and then one finds some dissatisfied or discontented mortals, who have been but a very short time in Florida, hurrying back North as if some pestilence were behind them. In such cases something like the following conversation may be heard :

"Why, my dear sir, you are wild to return North so early. Your family, if not yourself, will suffer in consequence if you go North before the 1st of May. The cold, raw days, of which we always have so many at the North till after the 20th of May, will be very injurious."

"Oh, I've made up my mind that coming to Florida for health is all nonsense."

"But," interrupts his friend, "you haven't been here long enough to know anything about this country or climate."

"Well, I think that by spending a day or two in each of the *best hotels*, or *a week or two traveling in steamer or railroad*, one can form a pretty correct idea of the country and the character of the climate. I, for one, have had all the experience I care for. If this is considered a climate to grow strong and sound in, or the people one meets are specimens of the effect of the climate upon the constitution, then Heaven help us! I never saw so many miserable, sallow, sickly, consumptive-looking people in the same length of time in my life as I have in the short time I have been in Florida. I am sick of the sights I see here. All the beauty—and I concede that there is a great deal—

can not compensate for the suffering which such forlorn-looking people must have endured. I feel as if I was in a vast lazaretto—feeble steps, hectic flushes, coughs that rack the body and seem to threaten instant death, rheumatism that cripples and distorts. I tell you I am sick of it all, and shall hurry back and risk the inclemency of the North, rather than remain another week."

"Why, my friend, you are getting excited. Reflect for one moment, and you will understand your mistake. Have you seen much of the people who belong here, or of those from the North and West who have settled here and make Florida their home?"

"Oh, no; I have made no acquaintances, and have seen only those who board for the winter at the hotels, or are met with in excursions up and down the river. I think that is quite sufficient to judge from, and I tell you I am disappointed and disgusted."

"And from what section of the country have these friends and acquaintances come?"

"Oh, from everywhere, I think — North, East, West—and to my surprise I have found many from the Old Country wandering about here."

"So, then, it seems it is the North, West, and East, and the countries from beyond the sea, that have poured all their sick into Florida to seek for health. It is not *the sick of Florida* at all, but the blind, halt, and maimed from other portions of the land—those half dying in colder regions, sent here as a last resort—that make you so bitter against the *physician* to whom they come for relief—often too

late—when all others have failed, and they know not what else to do."

No estimate that has the first semblance of truth or justice can possibly be made of the character of a people or the healthfulness of the climate of any state or country, if such knowledge is only gained from watching the transient occupants of fashionable hotels, or the multitudes who rush over the land from all parts of the world by steamer or railroad.

To form a just estimate, one should endeavor to find board in some neat and pleasant family (and such can be found without difficulty in many portions of this State), who have built up a home here. Select a family, if possible, who have been long enough here to be comfortably, but not luxuriously, settled. See what they have accomplished. Learn what brought them here, in what state of health they or some members of their family were when they came, and compare it with their present condition. This is the only honest and correct way of learning the truth. But let no one go back North to spread a report—honestly believed, no doubt—that Florida is a lazar-house, until, leaving hotel life, they explore in that direction which shall teach them to understand the country and its climate better. Hotel life, all over our land or in any country, is the worst phase from which to form a just estimate of character or climate. Hotels are usually occupied by transient guests, flitting hither and thither, either for business or pleasure, or, as invalids, imperfectly trying all things, but holding fast to none.

I have dwelt on this longer than I intended, but

feel it important, as well as just, that Florida should not be compelled to own all the invalids that visit her shores. When you hear of sickness and death in Florida, before you make out the estimate, just inquire from what section of the country these unfortunates came, or if they claim this State as their home.

Colton's township map of Florida locates all the smaller towns or villages which are springing up along the banks of the St. John's; and among them you will find Rollestown, about three miles from Palatka and two from San Mateo. It is on a bluff, or high land, and capable of being made exceedingly beautiful. About five thousand acres of this point is owned by two brothers, and on the bank of the river they are cultivating the orange-tree with unusual promise of success.

"In 1765 Denis Rolle, Esq., father of Lord Rolle of England, obtained from the King a grant of forty thousand acres, and embarked with one hundred families, intending to settle in Middle Florida, near the St. Mark's River, but was driven by stress of weather into the St. John's River, and, wearied with a long voyage, decided to remain, and selected his location, from about three miles above Palatka, nearly up to Denis Lake."

Here he built his own mansion and tenements for the people he brought over to cultivate his land, intending to raise corn, cotton, and indigo, the last being a very profitable article of merchandise.

This place has natural advantages surpassed by very few on the St. John's. On September 1, 1766,

Rolle writes of it: "Everything in nature seems to correspond toward the cultivation of the productions of the whole world, in some part or other of this happy province—*the most precious jewel in his Majesty's American dominions.*"

"The exports of this province of East Florida increased rapidly, the Florida indigo bringing the highest price in England, and everything indicated increasing prosperity and much pleasure; but then began a troublous time. The Spanish force got possession, but were surprised and routed a short time after; then the Indians became aggressive. The Spanish army again succeeded in gaining possession of a large part of Florida, giving the English people eighteen months either to remove with their property, or dispose of their effects, or accept Spanish rule and the Catholic faith." "Upon these homes, embowered among the orange-groves and made pleasant by the fragrant blossoms of the honeysuckle, the rose and acacia, in a land where Nature had lavished her choicest beauties and created a perpetual summer, the unfortunate residents of Florida were obliged to turn their backs for ever."

But since that period Florida has changed hands many times—ceded by the English to Spain in part, then again under English rule, then in part to France; back once more to Spain. At length, in 1821, this fair land of Florida became a part of these United States. But all along the banks of the beautiful rivers relics of the olden times may be found at almost every settlement.

At Rollestown, part of the old foundations of Rolle's mansion were used only a few weeks since as the foundation of the present cottage where I now write, and I have picked up the glazed bricks that were used in building the houses for his tenantry. The old earthworks and rifle-pits built to protect them from the Indians are still to be seen here.

But, as you see, this is an endless theme. I had intended to speak of the medicinal springs that abound in almost every portion of Florida, and other objects of great interest—at least, I find them so; but there must be a stopping-place somewhere, and it may as well be here. I would gladly have made these letters more interesting; all that is lacking must be attributed to the writer. The theme has all that the greatest genius can desire; but "what is writ, is writ. Would it were worthier!"

APPENDIX.

ORANGE-GROWING IN FLORIDA.—REMARKABLE FOUNTAIN IN FLORIDA.—PRODUCTS OF WESTERN FLORIDA.

APPENDIX.

ORANGE-GROWING IN FLORIDA.

A CORRESPONDENT of the Louisville "Courier-Journal" says:

"There are many errors afloat about Florida. Some suppose the orange belt covers the State. Orange culture is not safe north of the twenty-ninth parallel, and better south of the twenty-eighth. The sweet orange-tree will not grow in wet land any more than the apple-tree. The sour one is sometimes found in wet locations, and may be used in such places as a stock on which the sweet orange can be worked. But as the sour tree is a much slower grower, it must dwarf the sweet graft or perish beneath the superincumbent weight. No one who desires a permanent orchard of sweet trees would ever use a sour stock. The orange blooms in January and February, and a freeze at such times destroys fruit and trees. The northern counties are subject to such frosts, and hence experience has taught the old settlers that orange-culture can not succeed in such a climate. Cold continued long enough to form ice of half an inch must destroy the unpro-

tected trees, and smaller ones succumb to a less degree of cold. The lemon and lime succumb to still less cold, and the guava is destroyed at the freezing point, if continued for a few hours. The whole class of the custard apples are equally tender. The banana and pineapple fail near the same point. A multitude of other fruits and trees fall with these last.

"Another error one sees going the rounds of the papers is, that the orange will thrive under the native forest trees, and that it requires protection from the direct rays of the sun during summer. We know that the tree will not thrive in the shade of any tree unless it be the palmetto, which sends its feeding roots but a short distance. Few trees can endure a greater degree of sunshine than the orange, and it is used in some of the hottest portions of the world, as at Guanaguato in Mexico, to shade the coffee plants. The 'die-back' is the effect of cold, not of sunshine—of want of proper nutriment, not of heat of the sun in summer. Our advice to the fruit-grower, then, is to get as far south on the peninsula of Florida as he can find dry land, and as near water communication as may be."

REMARKABLE FOUNTAIN IN FLORIDA.

Taking a narrow path, I crossed through some dense underwood, and all at once I stood on the banks of Wakulla Spring. There was a basin of water one

hundred yards in diameter, almost circular. The thick bushes were growing almost to the water's edge, and bowing their heads under its unrippled surface. I stepped into a skiff and pushed off. Some immense fishes attracted my attention, and I seized a spear to strike them. The boatman laughed, and asked me how far below the surface I supposed they were. I answered, about four feet. He assured me that they were at least twenty feet from me, and it was so. The water is of the most marvelous transparency. I dropped an ordinary pin in the water, forty feet deep, and saw its head with perfect distinctness as it lay on the bottom. As we approached the center, I noticed a jagged, grayish limestone rock beneath us, pierced with holes; through these holes one seemed to look into unfathomable depths. The boat moved slowly on, and now we hung trembling over the edge of the sunken cliff, and far below it lies a dark, yawning unfathomable abyss. From its gorge comes pouring forth, with immense velocity, a living river. Pushing on just below its mouth, I dropped a ten-cent piece into the water, which is there 190 feet in depth, and I clearly saw it shining on the bottom. This seems incredible. I think the water possesses a magnifying power. I am confident that the piece could not be so plainly seen from the top of a tower 190 feet high. We rowed on toward the north side, and suddenly we perceived the water, the fish which were darting hither and thither, the long flexible roots, and the wide, luxuriant grasses on the bottom, all arrayed in the most brilliant prismatic hues. The gentle swell occasioned by the boat

gave to the whole an undulating motion. Death-like stillness reigned around, and a more fairy-like scene I never before beheld. So great is the quantity of water here poured forth, that it forms a river of itself large enough to float flatboats laden with cotton. The planter who lives here has thus transported his cotton to St. Mark's. Near the fountain we saw some of the remains of a mastodon which had been taken from it. The triangular bone below the knee measured six inches on each side. The Indian name of the fountain, Wakulla, means "The Mystery." It is said that the Spanish discoverers sprang into it with almost frantic joy, supposing they had discovered the long-sought Fountain of Youth, which should rejuvenate them.—*Correspondence of the New York Evening Post.*

PRODUCTS OF WESTERN FLORIDA.

Editors Western Rural: We promised you something of the productions of Florida. Let us begin by saying that oranges are not a product of Western Florida. All that region lying north of the Gulf of Mexico produces very little fruit of any kind. Peaches, plums, and Scuppernong grapes grow with care and cultivation. The peach does not thrive very well near the bay. There are no wild fruits except blackberries, and these are generally found in unapproachable places. Grass is a universal product, and

yet grass for pasturage after July is only found in swales or marshes. The upland wire grass is as tough as manilla. Fenced pastures are not known, for the pasturage has to be sought. He who discovers a grass which will sward those sandy lands and remain eatable through the summer, will confer a boon upon the Southern States. The leaves of the cane afford the chief support for cattle during a large part of the year. In other words, cattle live by "browsing" a goodly portion of the year in the piney woods. Corn is only grown upon prepared land, and then the crop is light—fifteen bushels to the acre being a good yield. Even sweet potatoes, although "to the manor born," require that the ground be fertilized. The same is true of all the vegetables.

The land is prepared in the following manner: A strong fence is placed around a plot of ground, looking not unlike our "cattle corrals," and the stock are penned in these inclosures at night. It is called "treading the land," and the soil is probably benefited by the treading as well as fertilized. It will be perceived at once that but a limited quantity of land can thus be prepared. The list of vegetables produced here is short. Irish potatoes are grown at almost any season of the year, and new ones could be had every month if our Western straw piles were only at hand for a top dressing. Cabbages, such as usually sell in Chicago for forty cents per dozen, sell there for seventy-five cents each.

Perhaps I can not better convey an idea of the country and its production than to describe the mar-

keting done at Millview during April, May, June, July, and August of the past summer. The market vehicles are mainly carts drawn by a single ox or horse (poor one), or dilapidated market wagons. The produce offered for sale was, in April, milk, buttermilk, Irish potatoes, greens, etc. In May it was much the same, with now and then a few cabbages and lettuce. In June the products were increased by green peas, plums, okra, corn, string beans, etc. The month of July gave us watermelons and peaches in addition to the above lists. Buttermilk finds a ready market. After selling their "stuff," the producers would repair to the store and lay in corn (grown in Illinois) for their working animals, meal for their families, tobacco, etc. An astonishing amount of the latter is used by the natives of the South. If you decide that the above is a meager list of marketable products, we have only to add that it is a true one, as we saw what we have described with our own eyes during those months.

The natural products of Florida and the piney wood generally through the Southern States are considerably diversified. The list of valuable woods is varied. The magnolia looks somewhat like our basswood. The blossom buds look just before flowering much like goose eggs on the limb ends. The flowers are exceedingly beautiful. The bay flower is as beautiful and as white, and more fragrant, but much smaller. There are many other varieties of wood, but the chief, the master of the situation, the great source of wealth and Southern industry, the source of the

pitch, tar, turpentine, lumber, spars, square timber, etc., the chief article of Gulf export, is the glorious Southern pine. There are two varieties, pitch and yellow. These stand like goblin sentries in thousands of square miles along the rivers entering the Atlantic and the Gulf westward to the Mississippi. The best paying industry of the South is its lumbering. It is the surest and quickest in returns. Reference to the census reports evidences that lumber is the great article of export, finding a market in Cuba and Europe, New York and Philadelphia.

W. H. G.

THE END.

00083763

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018